

September 29, 1960

Mr. William Consolazio
National Science Foundation
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Bill:

I've had your Summary of Observations on European Biology for some time and do not remember having answered it at the time that you sent it to me. I think that this was a highly perceptive report and I could not find much in it that I would disagree with. The situation in Italy seems to me especially tragic - perhaps it does because I am a little closer to some of its consequences. It is certainly true that the bulkinization of Europe is a great hindrance to academic liberalism; in any one country it is hard to avoid having either a glut or a lack of people for specific fields.

The one general remark I would make is that it might be rather valuable if an equally objective study of the status of science and the academic life could be made of the United States. While we are certainly very well off materially and seem to be making leaps and bounds in the growth of scientific knowledge, I am not at all sure that all is well with science as a human activity in this country and there are some features of the "more relaxed" pace of academic life in Europe that one might have cause to envy. How much more scientific creativity there is in the indigestible flood of fragmentary work that we are now producing is hard to judge.

I would be very much interested to have your own reflections on science in the United States as a companion piece to your European report.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics